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SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE FIFTH CONFERENCE

Report of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division

Paper submitted by the Dutch- and German-speaking Division**

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Membership and participation

1. In the period 1987-1992 experts from the following countries were members of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division:

Austria

Belgium

Federal Republic of Germany

German Democratic Republic (until 1990)

Netherlands

South Africa

Suriname

Switzerland

2. Switzerland held the chair during this period. The experts from Belgium and Suriname, apparently because of lack of funds and time, were not able to participate in the Division meetings. They were informed by correspondence. The Division has decided to invite also Belgian representatives from the Flemish and German parts of the country. At the last meeting of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, the Chairman was in contact also with the Italian delegate with a view to representation for the German minority language group in South Tyrol. So far no positive reactions can be reported.

Meetings

3. The Division held three meetings since the Fifth Conference in Montreal in 1987:

19 May 1989, Geneva

9-11 August 1990, Zurich and Rapperswil, Switzerland

13 November 1991, Geneva

4. Each meeting was attended by 8 to 10 experts. The agendas included usually detailed reports on the activities in the countries of the participants. Other items that kept the Division busy in all three meetings were the "United Nations Glossary on Terms in the Standardization of Geographical Names", the "Lists of Exonyms" and the "Training Seminars on Applied Toponymy". These items will be further discussed below. In Zurich the members had an opportunity to visit the editorial office for the Swiss national atlas and the school atlases. In St. Gallen they were shown the working methods of a Cantonal Names Commission in Switzerland.

Toponymic guidelines

5. Revision of the toponymic guidelines has been performed in South Africa and in Austria. Similar actions have been initiated in unified Germany and in Switzerland. Professor J. Breu (Austria) has resigned as coordinator for the "Guidelines for map and other editors" within the Group of Experts. This task was entrusted, at the fifteenth session, to Dr. P. E. Raper (South Africa).

Glossary of terms

6. Dr. O. Back and Dr. Breu (both Austria) had worked on the former glossary, which was to be amended and improved according to a resolution in Montreal. Their proposals were handed out to all members of the Division in a German and an English version for checking definitions and translations. Discussions on this subject were held also in the plenary sessions of the StAGN. At the second meeting of the Division in 1990 a second version was discussed in almost every detail, together with a first reaction and new proposals from the convenor of the Working Group, Professor N. Kadmon (Israel). It was felt that too many entries were scarcely related to the main topic, toponymy, but much more to mapping in general. The members were asked to mark all items that were to be deleted. The third version of the Division's proposal with 108 entries was sent in March 1991 to the convenor. At the 15th meeting of the Group of Experts he reported on the status of the project, but the Division has not so far been contacted or informed on further actions.

Lists of exonyms

7. After the Fifth Conference a decision was taken to continue the discussion about the task of preparing lists of exonyms. The Division is of the opinion that the policy expressed in the paper it presented to the Second Conference in London in 1972 (pp. 196 and 197 of the report), is still valid.

8. Various considerations with respect to exonyms have been formulated and repeatedly discussed. These amended guidelines will be presented to the Sixth Conference. Each member country of the Division is active in preparing modified lists. Austria has installed a Working Group for editing a publication on "Spelling of geographical names in Austrian teaching materials". The group has already held 29 sessions. South Africa has compiled a list of Afrikaans exonyms with their equivalents in English and their nationally standardized names. The StAGN publishes in regular intervals a synoptic list of the names of countries in the German language. This committee has initiated work on a "List of selected German designations for geographical names outside Germany, Austria and the German-speaking part of Switzerland and their equivalent official names" on the basis of a publication by the Ministry of the Interior of the German Democratic Republic in 1986. 1/ Switzerland has compiled "Lists of exonyms of geographical names within Switzerland for all four national languages", which will need some additional

checking and editing. The Netherlands hope to reactivate work on a list of Dutch exonyms other than countries and capitals, which is already published.

Training seminars on applied toponymy

9. Professor F. J. Ormeling, Sr., had reported to the Division on the success of the Seminar on Applied Toponymy, held in Indonesia in October 1989. He persuaded the Division about the importance of such seminars for the third world countries and urged that a team of lecturers be recruited for another course. He accepted the role of coordinator for the course programme and contacted possible host countries.

10. As this initiative had no response, the Netherlands offered to organize the seminar in Enschede and make a considerable financial contribution on condition that the course be held in the Netherlands. The Group of Experts secretariat, however, stated in September 1991 that the budget for 1992-1993 does not provide funds for a seminar.

11. At the fifteenth meeting of the Group of Experts meeting, Dr. F. J. Ormeling, Jr. was elected coordinator for the Working Group on Training Seminars. The recommendation submitted by the Division, to hold a seminar for applied toponymy in South-East Africa or in Eschede, was widely accepted.

12. In June/July 1992 a training course may be arranged in Pretoria, in collaboration between the Onomastic Research Centre of the Human Sciences Council and the University of Pretoria. Two experts from the Division lectured for this course.

Publications and toponymic data files

13. An exhaustive inventory of the publications published by the members of the Division may be gained from the individual reports by the respective countries. Several institutions were quite active in this field. Most publications have been and will be produced in the future from an increasing number of topographic data files, which are made available also on electronic storage media. Such data is an area of rapidly growing demand.

Participation at meetings of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

14. Experts from the Division were present at the two meetings of the Group of Experts in Geneva in 1989 and 1991 in considerable numbers. Six countries sent representatives who participated actively in the deliberations. Dr. Breu, who has been heavily engaged in this work for 24 years, resigned also as convenor of the Working Group on Romanization. The Group of Experts, opening its fifteenth session without a president, elected an expert from the

Division, Dr. P. E. Raper, as chairman. Although this task came upon him unexpectedly, he held this office with competence, engagement and distinction.

Notes

1/ Verzeichnis der Exonyme und anderer geographischer Namen in deutscher Sprache für kartographische Erzeugnisse der DDR, 1.Auflage (Ministry of the Interior, Verwaltung für Vermessungs-und Kartenwesen, Berlin, 1986), 80 pp.